



The Utopian Impulse
and Searching
for the Kingdom
of God: Ludwik
Królikowski's
(1799–1879)
Romantic Utopianism
in Transnational
Perspective*

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Утопический
импульс и поиски
Царства Божьего:
романтический
утопизм Людвика
Круликовского
(1799–1879) в
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перспективе)

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Abstract

This article addresses the question of the utopian impulse in Ludwik Królikowski's work and thought, with particular reference to its transnational dimension. By providing a holistic view of his entire life and sketching his biographical background, this study reveals Królikowski's principal inspirations and the reasons for his changes of mind, and in so doing, presents him against the background

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of various intersecting currents of thought. With regard to Królikowski's utopianism, it is argued that he rejected the canons typical for Renaissance and Enlightenment reflections on the ideal state, in which visions of spotless, well-organized cities dominated. The Polish thinker was instead interested in Christianity and extolled spontaneous human activities, which would be in accordance with the will of God only if they were pursued freely, without any coercion. As analysis of his works reveals, he expounded a vision of utopia (primarily called "the Kingdom of God") beyond time and space, without any consideration of the material conditions for its existence. In developing his views, Królikowski was inspired by Saint-Simonism, the Icarian movement, and ongoing discussions of the Polish and Slavic questions. These three main dimensions, interwoven with intermittent failures and reflections embarked upon anew, constituted the intellectual space in which his unique propositions were made.

Keywords

communism, Romanticism, Saint-Simonism, the 19th century history, the Icarian movement, utopianism

Резюме

В настоящей статье рассматривается вопрос об утопическом импульсе в трудах и мировоззрении Людвика Круликовского. Особое внимание уделено транснациональному аспекту развития его идей. На основе целостного историко-биографического анализа проведено исследование основных воззрений Круликовского в связи с различными обстоятельствами его жизненного пути, обусловившими причины изменений в этих воззрениях. Круликовский преодолел каноны утопизма, состоявшие в типичных для эпох Возрождения и Просвещения представлениях об идеальном государстве, где на первом плане находились образы городских общин с детальной и безупречной регламентацией жизни. Польский мыслитель проявлял значительный интерес к христианству и превозносил человеческую самодеятельность, которая, по его мысли, может осуществляться в соответствии с Божьей волей, только если не будет подвержена какому-либо принуждению. Результатом анализа трудов Круликовского стал развернутый им образ нематериальной, существующей вне времени и пространства утопии (изначально названный им «Царством Божьим»). Свои взгляды Круликовский развивал, вдохновляясь идеями сен-симонизма, икарского движения и актуальными в его время дискуссиями о польском и славянском вопросе. Эти три направления развития его идей, обусловившие перемежавшиеся неудачами Круликовского перемены в его воззрениях, составляют пространство, в котором разворачивались специфические суждения мыслителя.

Ключевые слова

коммунизм, романтизм, сен-симонизм, история XIX века, икарское движение, утопизм

Preface

Despite the fact that the Polish utopianism (broadly understood) is, to some extent, an oft-overlooked area of inquiry, there exists a well-grounded contention that the East Central European political imagination in the 19th century remained relatively untouched by the proliferation of visions of a future ideal society [Trencsényi et al 2016: 54–55]. Such a state of affairs in this region of Europe would seem remarkably different from the situation in Western Europe, where many social innovators and early socialist schools of the time made real efforts to establish ideal brick-and-mortar communities as proof of the genuineness of their views [Antony 2016]. As is well known, all these attempts attracted enormous criticism both in their time and thereafter, as social innovators were considered to be apologists for dictatorships and totalitarianisms [e.g. Talmon 1960].

The early Polish communist Ludwik Królikowski was not immune to such criticism, but the damning condemnation he received was largely at the hands of 20th-century historians. Królikowski's peers were, to some extent, inclined to see the positive aspects of his ideas, even if they differed considerably in their assessments. For example, as early as the 1840s, Królikowski's ideas had caught the attention of the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, who perceived him as a religious thinker whose ideas were more splendid than those of the German philosophers [Mickiewicz 1865: 240]. At the same time, however, the Polish philosopher and writer Karol Libelt stated that Królikowski was profoundly non-religious, and compared him to Saint-Simon and Bruno Bauer [Libelt 1967: 314]. In later periods, his works and thought were considered unrealistic by a number of authors, and therefore treated with evident contempt (in part because of his chaotic or simply bad writing style) [Lubecki 1921; Turowski 1958]. At the same time, however, there were also historians inclined to claim that Królikowski's statements should be distinguished from the authoritarian pronouncements of many of early socialists and communists [Brock 1960: 161]. This latter opinion constitutes the point of departure for my reflections.

Instead of suggesting that one political project or another was chimeric, or even totalitarian, I propose to return to the etymology of utopia, which comes from Greek *ou-topos*, i.e. “no place”. Restoration of this original meaning may render illegitimate the search for clear instances where attempts were made to turn utopian visions into realities, but it simultaneously opens up a space for thinking about utopia as an attempt to expand the range of imaginative possibilities [Szacki 2000: 12]. This seems particularly appropriate against the background of the general stages through which utopian thinking passed in the first decades of the 19th century. In that period, utopias ceased to be primarily a literary genre consisting of the leitmotiv of travel towards an

undiscovered land where an ideal state had once been located. Rather, utopian blueprints for a future society began to be considered as the outcome of scientific deliberation, which had necessarily to also take into account the category of space, no longer treated as a passive background, but rather as a factor almost directly contributing to the formation of a utopia [Baczko 1978: 21; Vilder 1995]. In addition, in the 19th century, utopias became an element of popular yearnings, making their presence felt in many forms of social activity [Rancière 1989; Riot-Sarcey 1998]. Thus, it appears that elements of utopian thinking made themselves felt at many levels of radicals' activities.

For this reason, what interests me here is consideration of utopia as an impulse penetrating and enhancing modes of critical assessment of the existing world. Consequently, the aim of this article is to explore both divergent and recurrent utopian concepts in Ludwik Królikowski's political thought over his lifetime. This object of study, explored across a broad timeframe, may reveal general tendencies in Romantic utopian discourse. Moreover, given that Królikowski wrote a significant percentage of his texts in French and was personally deeply involved in French political movements, his case constitutes an interesting example of political ideas formed at the junction of two completely different socio-political contexts. All in all, in this article I intend to formulate answers to the following questions: How and why did Królikowski's utopian ideas change over time? What themes and genres were dominant in his utopian reflections? How did he synthesize his French and Polish experiences and inspirations? And, more broadly, how can his case contribute to a more general understanding of Romantic utopias?

As a result of Królikowski's important role in 19th-century radical political circles, a significant number of studies have already been devoted to his political activities and ideas. While in recent years French historians in particular have revealed many new facts concerning his life [Cordillot and Fourn 2002], many lacunas still exist. However, in the following paragraphs I limit myself to providing only the most necessary context for my interpretations, in some cases also enriching existing knowledge about his biography.

Experiencing utopia

Królikowski's way of life was far from typical among his peers. He was born into a peasant family in Piotrkowice, in the Russian partition. However, his father was able to read and write, so it would be wrong to consider his domestic environment typical of the Polish peasantry of that time. Once again unexpectedly in the light of his social roots, as a teenager he attended school in Kielce. There, his best friend was Piotr Ściegienny, who also later became involved in radical organizations. This coincidence—two schoolmates who found themselves in the ranks of parallel political movements in the 1840s—

has inclined some historians to consider the place of origin of the two boys (village communities in the Russian partition) as a decisive factor influencing their later political standpoints [Turowski 1958: 199–232]. However, in the paragraphs below I argue that such a view, while not completely wrong, is over-simplified.

Królikowski's studies at the University of Warsaw over the period 1823–1827 played a pivotal role in shaping his mentality. At that time, he was interested in many disciplines, participating as an unenrolled student in courses on physics, chemistry, theology, philosophy, and more, but eventually graduating in administration [Ujejski 1912: 429]. Aside from his university education, another factor affecting his views in this period was the underground student groups then flourishing in Warsaw. Readers of Jan Nepomucen Janowski's memoirs of the 1820s will come across numerous descriptions of "trysts" [*schadzki*]¹—informal meetings in which the participants discussed vital issues and the nature of patriotism in their milieu [Janowski 1950: 98–99]. Moreover, during his studies in Warsaw Królikowski met two people with whom he decided to move to France and enroll in a course in one of the Saint-Simonian schools there.

This three-year sojourn in Paris (1828–1831) may be considered a real turning point in the shaping of his political imagination. His participation in meetings held in the hub of the Saint-Simonian movement, a building on the rue Monsigny, exerted a particularly strong influence upon his political imagination. The memoirs of his close friend, Bogdan Jański, shed light on their daily activities at the time, demonstrating that they passed their life there in an almost monastic routine. They lived in small cells and participated in common rituals and celebrations along with other Saint-Simonians. A common kitchen and common meals, regular meetings with ritual breaking of bread, and conversations held in a language saturated with religious metaphors—all of this became part and parcel of their daily experience [Micewski 1983; Jański 2011a: 135; Charléty 2018]. Also in the years 1828–1831, Królikowski established contact with some of the main figures of the Saint-Simonian movement, such as Barthélemy Prosper Enfantin, Amand Bazard, and Michel Chevalier. Interestingly enough, several years later, when Saint-Simonist ideas had visibly lost momentum, Królikowski and Jański bitterly commented in their correspondence on the later ideological choices of their former collaborators, who decided to immerse themselves in Catholicism, strive for political careers, or even work as journalists in the conservative press [Jański 2011b: 447–448].

However, in 1831, when the Saint-Simonian movement in France had reached the peak of its popularity, with approximately 500–600 sympathizers [Picon 2002: 77–78], the Polish uprising broke out in the Russian partition. Thus, in May 1831, Królikowski hastily left Paris and moved back to Poland

[Jański 2001: 103], where he became involved in the November Uprising as an ardent propagandist. It seems evident, however, that his political views formulated after 1831 were profoundly affected by the experience of his strong commitment to Paris's Saint-Simonian circles, in which he could not only imagine, but also experience life in a real community with particular rituals, ceremonies, requirements, and modes of communication. In the following paragraph, I describe how this three-year sojourn in the French capital affected his utopian thought.

Planning utopia

During his relatively short, three-month involvement in political affairs during the November Uprising, Królikowski published a cycle of short articles in the journal *Gazeta Polska* ("The Polish Gazette"), which may be seen as a harbinger of his later utopian deliberations. It was then—for the first time in Polish political discourse—that he introduced, i.e. transferred from the French context, ideas connected to social radicalism, such as progressive taxation, or described the "passive strata" of society, such as the aristocracy, as parasites [GP 181; GP 217]. Moreover, in his cycle of articles, he formulated a critical stance on the Polish authorities during the Uprising, suggesting that all governments were, by their very nature, dismissive towards freedom of speech [GP 158; GP 159]. Likewise, Królikowski claimed that concern for the well-being of the people should not be limited to representative bodies, as Jesus had not been authorized by any election yet had done more good for ordinary people than any government [GP 193]. Over the course of time, critical remarks directed against the very essence of political power as such became more and more prevalent and multifaceted in his writings.

A couple of months later, after the collapse of the November Uprising, Królikowski made an unusual decision—he moved to Cracow and opened a dormitory there for young students. While living in Cracow, Królikowski stayed out of the disputes convulsing the Polish circles in exile, such as violent quarrels about the reasons for the defeat. Nevertheless, the city at that time was far from being stifled and subdued. On the contrary, in the 1830s it was a real center for smuggling illegal literature and for the activities of underground political groups [Berghauzen 1974]. This probably explains how Królikowski gained access to the *Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* ("The Books of the Polish People and of the Polish Pilgrimage"). Reading this work, he was charmed by both the text itself and by its author, who was Mickiewicz. Królikowski proclaimed the poet a leader of the Polish circles in exile, and, in a letter sent in 1833, recommended that he bring these circles together in the framework of a Monastery of the Polish Children (*Zakon Dzieci Polskich*). It is significant that Królikowski did not consider such an imagined

community to be a structure internally hostile to the French government. In fact, he felt precisely the opposite. As a first step, he advised that formal consent be acquired in order to ensure that this innovative community would not be liquidated by the authorities. What's more, he also recommended that, from the very beginning, the Monastery should be considered a place to work and live not only for the few thousand Poles in exile, but rather for millions of people [LLKdAM 1991]. This proposal was clearly inspired by his time in Paris, especially his propositions concerning the perfect unity of members and the end of ongoing, paltry political disputes. His first fully elaborated blueprint for a new society is thus based on the assumption that, at the very moment such a community emerges, even in an embryonic state, all ongoing political strife becomes invalid for those involved in it. In his subsequent thought, the concept of unity was to be a recurring, overarching motif in his utopian reflections.

Due to the limited space afforded freedom of speech in the Polish lands, Królikowski could not fully elaborate his stance while living in Cracow. This does not mean, however, that his sojourn in the city was a wasted period in terms of his intellectual development. On the contrary, in one of his letters from 1840, he stressed that he wrote a number of articles in the 1830s, but was unable to release them [3685/4, 150]. Paradoxically, the authorities actually facilitated their publication in 1839, when Królikowski was suspected of supporting an illegal organization, ordered to leave Cracow, and so moved to Paris, where he threw himself instantly into the vibrant political life there.

Characteristically, even in his correspondence from the very first months of his sojourn in France, he made clear efforts to distance himself from "isms", including Fourierism, Catholicism, Jesuitism, and Saint-Simonism alike [3685/4, 150]. Despite these declarations, however, his output from the early 1840s in particular seems to carry strong Saint-Simonian overtones. However, over time, as he delved deeper into the twists and turns of political life in France, and in order to refine his ideological arguments, he elaborated a number of original notions.

It is worth mentioning that, on the eve of his energetic participation in Parisian disputes, he was also inspired by a couple of other authors. In a letter to the Polish democrat Jan Nepomucen Janowski, Królikowski mentioned with evident admiration the works of Éliphas Lévi, Alphonse Esquiros, Étienne Cabet, and Étienne-Gabriel Morelly (mentioning his *Code de la Nature*) [3685/4, 132]. Thus, it is evident that amongst the authors who inspired Królikowski profoundly at the time were thinkers interested in occultism, utopias, mysticism, and social transformation (broadly understood). Królikowski's ardent faith in the possibility of profound change in the world was also enhanced by his aversion to history in the broad sense. When asked by Janowski whether he

had taken any historical books with him when he left Cracow, Królikowski emphatically responded: “Dealing with prophecies and the future, I am moving away from the past and turning from it with tenderness, as if from Sodom and Gomorrah, to where Christ was killed because of his love for the people” [3685/4, 204]. As I demonstrate below, all these inspirations and assumptions were to influence his later reflections.

Characteristically, in revealing his ideas during the early years of his second sojourn in Paris, Królikowski relied on the strategy of propagating polemics rather than constructing new propositions for social change. In *Zjednoczenie* (“Unity”), he released a cycle of texts entitled *Pogromki* (a peculiar word which does not exist in contemporary Polish and literally means “small pogroms”), in which he offered many extremely negative remarks about the nobility (*szlachta*) as well as his political enemies (i.e. almost every Polish political organization of the time). Two dimensions of these short publications should be particularly highlighted. First, Królikowski was convinced that his own ideas, even those concerning different visions of the Kingdom of God on earth, were far from being utopian. However, as he emphasized, democrats and monarchists portrayed his conceptions as entirely utopian, whereas it was in fact they who were the ones formulating ridiculous ideas, encouraging their readers to sacrifice everything for the sake of a Polish King, or seeing the best way to redeem their fatherland in armed struggle, heedless of the other dimensions of such an endeavor [Zjednoczenie 1841: 63–64]. Królikowski’s attempts to disseminate his ideas through fervent polemics were not simply a rhetorical strategy. Rather, they were an integral element of his political theology, in which there was no room for any conciliation between good and evil [Stasi 2017].

Despite the possibility of close collaboration with the editorial board of *Zjednoczenie*, Królikowski’s ambition was to establish his own journal. Thus, in 1842, he published the first volume of *Polska Chrystusowa* (“Christ’s Poland”), a journal intended to be a platform for promoting his beliefs. The articles published in *Polska Chrystusowa*, most likely all of which were authored by Królikowski, contained general reflections on the true Christianity, understood as a complex program of social reforms put forward hundreds of years ago by Jesus, and afterwards obfuscated by false priests and bishops. Drawing on clear distinctions between the old and the new world, Królikowski used harsh language, imbued with visions of flames, destruction, and condemnation as general metaphors for the people’s revenge on their oppressors. Even nature seemed to be on the side of Królikowski’s revolution. These vividly positive characterizations of the living material world coincided with rejection of certain aspects of human creation, e.g. of modern cities. He stated that: “Big cities, in their current state, pour into our souls gloomy and deathly feelings,

because they have not anything loving or anything of the folk in them. You can find more fraternal relations within a beehive or anthill than in contemporary cities. For this reason, somebody rightly called them ulcers on society and graves of the virtues" [PCh 1842: 46–47]. What's more, a recurrent motif in the first volume of *Polska Chrystusowa* was the metaphor of "Christ's sword", which he used to depict the people's rebellion. However, Królikowski seldom returned to this formulation in his later works. Perhaps he adopted this metaphor as a result of his extensive reading of Esquiros (for whom the cross was a symbol of revolutionary violence) [Bowman 2016: 211]. In any case, later, his pacifist stance plainly came to the fore.

He applied a different rhetorical strategy in the second issue of *Polska Chrystusowa*, released in 1843. In the opening article, Królikowski signaled his intention "to mark out this perennial social pattern, which comes from God" [PCh 1843: 214]. Thus, in 1843—most likely in response to the continual insistence of his peers, who demanded that he formulate a more precise blueprint for the future society—Królikowski elaborated his conception of *Zjednoczenie* ("Unity"). Interestingly, this was the first time he had applied this term to his vision of the Kingdom of God on earth. Królikowski seemingly wanted to frame his vision as part of a wider category which sounded familiar to his readers. It is worth mentioning that, at the time, all Polish political organizations and institutions, to be considered as representative of the whole nation, had to prove their intention to promote unity [Kieniewicz 1976]. This step was characteristic of Królikowski's rhetorical strategy: in promoting completely new conceptions, he attempted to use well-known categories to frame them, in the hope that this might make his abstract ideas a little more comprehensible.

In its form, his vision of *Zjednoczenie* was far from a typical utopia. It consisted of hundreds of points with precise propositions rather than a novel set in an ideal state [PCh 1843: 209–383]. Perhaps this was another attempt to present his groundbreaking proposal in categories comprehensible to his peers. In other words, from a formal standpoint, his proposal resembled a constitution, and this is how it was taken up in the debates current in Polish political circles in exile. In the 1840s, at least two proposals for new Polish constitutions were promulgated, by Felicjan Abdon Wolski and Aleksander Napoleon Dybowski [Grajewski 1959; Grajewski 1966]. However, Królikowski's propositions differed substantially from these proposals.

Most importantly, Królikowski's thoughts on this topic barely even touched upon the restored Polish state, because for him what was at stake was the transformation of humankind. When *Zjednoczenie* became a reality, especially at the microstructural level, it was to suspend all existing legal categories, such as citizenship. According to this proposition, the only conditions for participation in *Zjednoczenie* were a strong will to improve one's own life and

the life of others, a desire to live in austerity, rejection of the old world, and, finally, agreement to live in a community in which all members were to have at their disposal the absolute power “of life, fire, sword, and death of others” [PCh 1843: 215, 330]. Groups of several people confident in the cause and willing to make this sacrifice were to constitute the basic institution of *Zjednoczenie*: the Family. As in the case of his former proposal, the Monastery of the Polish Children, Królikowski envisaged that the whole earth would eventually be covered by a network of Families. Królikowski's idea was that ten Families were to create a Retinue, ten Retinues were to create a Commune, and so on until the final stage, which was to be an All-Encompassing Power (*Wszechwładztwo*). The author highlighted that officials should be elected by vote, with each Family having its own representative in a Retinue, each Retinue in a Commune, and so on. Królikowski saw senior officials as “servant minions”, who should wear prison uniforms and ropes around their necks to remind them what would happen to them if they betrayed their cause [PCh 1843: 214–215, 330–340]. In this way, he created a complicated and highly bureaucratic system, with many levels of power and intricate methods of control.

It seems likely he himself began to consider this proposal a failure soon after its dissemination. He never returned to this vision of *Zjednoczenie*, and it is the only example of such a detailed blueprint for a future society. Nevertheless, the formulation of this eccentric plan for a flawless future society induced him to further develop certain ideas he had previously only hinted at, particularly concerning the divine core of the human heart. Back in the first volume of *Polska Chrystusowa*, he had explained that “[w]e should make all possible efforts [...] to ignite God's fire within our hearts [...] the same which invigorated Moses when he was faced with the abjection, oppression, and misery of the Jewish people; the same which invigorated John the Baptist when he urged his compatriots to do penance because they were tamely tolerating the power of pagan Rome; the same which invigorated Jesus when he was castigating the scribes, Pharisees, priests, rich men, tax collectors, and merchants” [PCh 1842: 62]. Taking this previously elaborated conviction as his starting point, Królikowski, when defining the preliminary conditions for participation in *Zjednoczenie*, dealt with the issue of the utopian impulse by claiming that, on the threshold of a new world, man must first change himself, and only then may he ponder the institutional framework. In other words, he was convinced that there existed a perennial, God-given spirit striving for a new world.

In his proposal, he therefore made almost no effort to consider the material or technical basis for this world, as if these problems were completely secondary. He tended to assess the living conditions of ordinary people in a similar way. Being deeply convinced that their situation was tragic, he did

not differentiate between the exploitation of workers in the then-modern factories and the condition of slaves in ancient societies. This distinction between the eternal and the temporal may be seen even at the level of the spelling of certain words. Similarly to Cabet, who consistently used a capital letter when referring to the people (*le Peuple*) [Fourn 2014: 37], Królikowski employed majuscule when discussing such questions as truth, the people, or brotherhood. However, when his investigations pertained to affairs which were not of a perennial nature, but rather were associated with an epoch, such as “the people suppressed by the tsar”, he would use minuscule. In some cases, Królikowski even wrote certain proper names, such as the name of the Russian tsar (Nicholas I) in minuscule. These were all ways for him to show that the material world was subordinated to the world of spirit.

This approach is also in evidence in the last volume of *Polska Chrystusowa*, which was released three years later, in 1846. In it, against the background of ongoing preparations for the future Polish uprising, he concerned himself with the burning issue of the war for independence, while also attempting to create his own political organization—one which could potentially affect the preparations for the war. In all these respects, he built on his previous political statements. Thus, while heated disputes about the future uprising were engrossing the Polish circles in exile [Limanowski 1983: 473–580], Królikowski claimed that the only way to liberate the whole nation was to do away with all governments (even national ones), and “to overturn all rules” [PCh 1846b: 134–135]. In his customary manner, he wrote: “...all people’s revolutions are the gasp of God, which bursts out in social thunder and shakes numb nations to reinvigorate them. Woe to those who do not support such a revolution inasmuch as they should serve God” [PCh 1846b: 167].

He amplified this statement in another article, which constituted a call for a “Confederation of the Polish People”, in which he emphasized that the voice of the people may become the voice of God only if “the people are liberated from the dominion of tsars, masters, redeemers, and benefactors” [PCh 1846a: 9]. Simultaneously, he proposed the creation of circles, each consisting of between ten and nineteen “Brothers and Sisters”, who would live together in a community [PCh 1846a: 20]. Indeed, in the following months he gathered together a small group of supporters.

Disappointing utopias

However, the failure of the 1846 uprising, which was suppressed by a peasant rebellion which took place in the Austrian partition of Galicia, rocked him to the core. During this momentous time, with his hopes for resolution of the Polish question evidently betrayed, Królikowski and his current supporters established a new journal entitled *Zbratnienie*. Once again, it seems that in

order to make his eccentric notions sound more domestic, Królikowski used a play on words in order to arrive at this peculiar title. From the point of view of contemporary Polish, the word *zbratnienie* makes no sense, but it seems that its meaning may be understood as ‘brotherhood in the process of establishment’, or ‘brotherhood in the making’. This is suggested by the prefix ‘z’, which in Polish often marks a dynamic process. What’s more, *bratnienie* seems to mean something other than *bratanie*. The latter suggests mainly social relations, whereas the former sounds more like a closed social system. The same duality can be felt in Królikowski’s utopianism.

Two issues of the journal were finally released in 1847 and 1848. The dominant themes in the articles published on the pages of *Zbratnienie* were, firstly, assessment of the 1846 peasants’ rebellion, and, secondly, the role played by democrats in these events. Królikowski, as well as other authors writing in *Zbratnienie*, were convinced that the rebellious peasants, and especially their leader Jakub Szela, had been incited to revolt by the Austrian authorities. Therefore, they could not represent the genuine voice of God, according to the principles previously set out by Królikowski. Seen from this angle, Szela, who rose against the Polish uprising, was a symbol of a persistent disunity in the Polish community. As Królikowski stated: “As long as we are divided into factions, only Szelas, small Szelas and smaller Szelas [*Szele, Szelaki i Szelaczki*—PK], regardless of their affiliations and the scope of their authority, will control us and push us around. But not only are the Szelas killing our bodies—what is a thousand times more calamitous, there are also Szelas killing our spirit!” [*Zbratnienie* 1846, III–IV]. Moreover, Królikowski mockingly declared that the leader of the rebellion had to be a monarchist, because he was loyal to the orders of the Austrian emperor [*Zbratnienie* 1847b: 171]. Furthermore, in assessing the role of the democrats in these tragic events, Królikowski claimed that they represented the most pernicious tendencies in humankind, and for this reason were against progress [*Zbratnienie* 1847a: 90–93]. All these bitter reflections on issues convulsing Poland coincided in time with Królikowski’s growing status inside the French Icarian movement. Losing faith in Poland, he found in this movement a new path, one which could lead to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. For this reason, over the next couple of years he wrote only in French.

His extraordinary change of direction should be seen in the context of French political life at the time. In the 1840s, when the unfulfilled promises of Saint-Simonism were nothing but a vague recollection, many of those whose political imaginations were shaped during their time as supporters of *Enfantine* or *Bazard* found themselves moving in Fourierist circles [Picon 2002: 127]. Królikowski, unexpectedly, had in early 1842 already made contact with Cabet, the de facto leader of the openly communist Icarian movement, whose

political ideas were far removed from the doctrine of Saint-Simon and his most devoted disciples [Johnson 1974: 93–94; Fourn 2018]. Probably as a result of the discussions they shared, on May 8, 1842, Cabet's journal *Le Populaire* published an announcement concerning a new cycle of articles, which were to prove that Christ's doctrine was the only way to establish equality and brotherhood, and could be realized only in a well-established community [LP 1842]. Consequently, in the period 1842–1846, Królikowski and Cabet wrote a total of a dozen or so short articles, with such representative titles as "Communism is Christianity", or "The True Communist is the True Christian". These texts marked a significant shift in Cabet's doctrine, but also constituted a space in which Królikowski could expound his views on the essence of Christianity for a French audience. As a result of their joint investigations, in 1846, Cabet published one of his principal works, in which he thanked Królikowski (who cooperated with the French communist under the pseudonym Charles) for his insightful observations [Cabet 1848: 6].

As a result of these intensive contacts, Królikowski was playing a growing role in the Icarian movement. During the turbulent months of the 1848 revolution, he became the secretary of the Icarian revolutionary club, the *Société fraternelle centrale* in Paris [Lucas 1851: 142–143]. Subsequently, when the revolution appeared to have ended and Cabet left for Nauvoo in the USA in order to establish a model Icarian community there, his Polish supporter assumed the duties of editor of *Le Populaire* [Prudhommeaux 1907: 253–254]. One testimony to Królikowski's importance at that time is his correspondence with the Franco-Jewish philosopher Moses Hess, who asked Królikowski whether he would be interested in publishing his articles in the journal [LCMHLK 1960]. Moreover, during the period 1848–1851, Cabet sent almost 100 letters to Królikowski from the USA, often consisting of not only organizational tips and suggestions, but even personal requests [NAF 18151/VI]. It seems that he saw Królikowski as his confidant.

It was at that time that the Polish Icarian, impressed by the revolutionary events taking place in France but simultaneously facing a growing wave of counterrevolution, dared to make an important gesture. In December 1850, he was the first Polish person to use the term "communist" as a self-applied label [LP 1850: 68]. Obviously, this term was not new in the political discourse of the Icarian movement, given that Icarians, and Cabet personally, had been giving themselves this label since the early 1840s [Saage 1999: 73]. However, Królikowski defined himself as a communist in particular circumstances, at a time when, after the crackdown on the 1848 revolution, anticommunist discourse was gaining momentum [Fourn 2004]. In this context, the word took on lurid overtones as a vague epithet which nevertheless had clear negative force. This explains why he used the term "communism", and not the more

popular and less controversial “socialism”. The latter, being the term coined by Pierre Leroux in 1831 as an antonym for “individualism”, could be understood in the categories of the newly established social sciences, i.e. as a reflection on human nature [Prochasson 1997: 29–34; Peillon 2018]. In contrast, the concept of communism had little in common with highbrow theories: this term was much more obscure and intimidated its opponents, who saw in it only pure destruction and barbarity. In order to explain its meaning, Królikowski once again had recourse to well-known categories, describing a communist as the most devoted patriot, the most sincere republican, and so on [LP 1850: 68]. What's more, he also added that an enemy of communism must simultaneously be against all individual spontaneity [Sdf 1851a: 181].

This last remark is of particular importance when seen against the background of the ongoing dispute in France during and after the 1848 revolution about forms of political sovereignty. When supporters of Napoleon III contended that only that part of the people who obeyed the law and did not take part in street riots deserved to be represented, their left-wing opponents responded vehemently, putting forward their own idea of the sovereignty of the people and insisting on enfranchisement [Rosanvallon 2000]. In contrast to both these standpoints, Królikowski proposed a vision of spontaneous sovereignty, in which the people's will could be pursued directly, without any mediation and, most significantly, without any government [Sdf 1851b: 214–224]. It is worth noting that, at this stage of ideological development, he had moved far away from his previous visions of centralized structures, such as the monastery or *Zjednoczenie*.

Unexpectedly, Królikowski's ideas attracted the attention of Cabet, who in 1851 returned to France. During his sojourn in Nauvoo, Cabet was to some extent in the dark about the content being published under Icarian imprints, but after his return, he announced that these ideas, and in particular the rejection of such institutions as a general election and a constitution, had nothing in common with Icarian doctrine [NAF 18148/III et IV, 261–262]. As a result, he soon jettisoned Królikowski, reproaching him for preaching ideas contradictory to those which were being put into practice in the Icarian colony in Nauvoo.

Nonetheless, even when they parted ways, Królikowski still seemed inclined to cooperate with Cabet on certain issues. Interestingly, their quarrel coincided with a growing crisis inside the Icarian colony, where whispers of dismay concerning Cabet's authoritarian style of ruling were becoming louder. Thus, in an 1853 letter to Jean-Pierre Beluze, Królikowski formulated a new blueprint for a colonizing endeavor (the new colony was to be named the *Société fraternelle*, but the ambition was to establish a global *Société universelle*), noting that he had earlier sent the same proposal to “C.” (most likely

Cabet), although he went on to mention that “C.” had responded negatively to his suggestion that the new colony might be established as an independent community in the vicinity of Nauvoo. In the letter, Królikowski enumerated the main principles of the proposed Société fraternelle, stressing how different the principles of his plan were from those being realized by Cabet. For example, Królikowski opted for accepting only small groups (of at least five persons) willing to join the colony, not individuals. Furthermore, acceptance of such a group would be possible only if no fewer than three leaders (*chefs*), each of them heading a group already part of the community, consented to its inclusion. Moreover, he underlined that his proposal did not provide for any constitutions or laws, and guaranteed the same rights and privileges to both sexes. Finally, the initial sum of money which all new incomers were to be charged was to be refunded if they left the colony. He estimated the cost of establishing such a colony at 150,000 francs. Plainly, his utopian visions were still based on the concept of cooperation between small groups, previously called “families”, the bottom rung of any new political structure [NAF 18148/III et IV, 247–248]. This issue sets Królikowski apart from Cabet, Fourier, and other radical thinkers of the 19th century, who envisaged communities rather as monoliths composed of hundreds or even thousands of members.

Interestingly, in his further correspondence, Beluze proposed to Królikowski the establishment of a new colony in Venezuela, but the Polish communist responded negatively. He was convinced that the USA was the most appropriate country in which to implement this project, because freedom of settlement and freedom of expression were a reality there more than anywhere (especially, as Królikowski stressed, in Pennsylvania). He had also no doubt that in the next year he and his closest collaborators (he had apparently gained some support amongst Icarians let down by Cabet) were going to collect no less than 100,000 francs for the colony [NAF 18148/III et IV, 252]. During this time, he also made contact with Fourierists (and former Icarians who had converted to Fourierism [Cordillot 2018]) who had attempted to put their social theories into practice by establishing a seed of the future society in the Reunion phalanstery (in Texas) [C 233]. He also tried to launch a new journal in order to disseminate his views. In the end, however, all these efforts turned out to be fruitless.

Disappointed by successive failures in his attempts to mobilize dissidents from the Icarian movement, in a letter from 1857, Królikowski hinted at his new inspiration: the idea of reconciliation of Slavic communities with the idea of pure Christianity. In this respect, he was inspired by Walerian Krasiński's *Histoire religieuse des peuples slaves*, a book which he encouraged his addressee, Konstanty Zaleski, to read (371 IV/VIII, 7). This change in his mindset was likely triggered by his huge disappointment in the successive failures of the

Icarian movement, the ranks of which were being gradually abandoned by supporters. This did not mean that Królikowski had given up the idea of communal life. On the contrary, in 1857, he insisted that at least several “Slavic persons” should gather and settle in one building in order to “fulfil Slavic obligations” [371 IV/VIII, 11]. Once again, he was on the verge of discovering another path which just might lead to the Kingdom of God.

Archaizing utopia

With this purpose in mind, Królikowski resumed his participation in Polish public life, which at that time was riven by disputes about the upcoming Polish uprising (which did indeed break out in 1863 and is known as the January Uprising). His statements concerning this dispute were quite at odds with his statements from the 1840s, when he was much more inclined to praise revolutionary violence and to use such metaphors as the aforementioned “Christ’s sword”. In 1862, he published a peculiar poem entitled “Praise of the Goose Family” (*Pochwała rodu gęsiego*), in which he adamantly opposed any use of swords other than those carried by “Sons of God, extolling truth and love”. Likewise, harking back to the views he expressed while editor of *Le Populaire*, Królikowski praised a flock of geese as a structure in which there were no governments, constitutions, or privileges, and in which serfdom as such was therefore completely unthinkable. In this regard, he emphasized that the quarrels amongst Polish aristocratic and democratic circles on the eve of the uprising were utterly futile: representatives of these two political currents had no intention other than to take power and establish a dictatorship [Królikowski 1862]. Characteristically, in the poem, Królikowski again used metaphors referring to nature, which were almost entirely absent in the French texts he wrote while participating in the Icarian movement. Clearly, he was convinced that these rhetorical devices could not be effective in the discourse of a movement which enjoyed particular popularity in French industrial cities, but not in rural communities.

It was not only in this peculiar poem that Królikowski opposed armed struggle as such. In his correspondence with Zaleski from that period too, he expressed his doubts about Mikhail Bakunin’s conviction that Russian peasants were willing and well-prepared to launch an anti-tsarist rebellion in the near future [371 IV/VIII, 15–16]. Interestingly, in the early 1860s, both Królikowski and his Polish friend Zaleski must have been active in a milieu quite close to the Russian anarchist, as in their correspondence they also shared some personal remarks about Bakunin and his close supporters. These contacts might perhaps have provided ammunition for Królikowski’s criticism of any vision of authority.

The use of a flock of geese as the ultimate metaphor for a true Christian society was not the only evidence of sustained reflection on nature in

Królikowski's works. In 1865 he published both an article (in French) and a voluminous book (in Polish) in which he expounded his views on the topic. In the article, he contended that the only genuine theology should focus on the recognition of nature, because nature as such was a divine, infinite gospel, and living proof of the omniscience of God. This same omniscience, however, was in evidence in the human senses, which were profoundly penetrated by the will of God. This will could be temporarily suppressed in humans, but not completely thwarted [LAr 1865]. Similarly, in his book, released in the same year, he drew a parallel between nature and human spontaneity. Królikowski claimed that the hearts of all people contained "certain nuclei of their own and their neighbors' redemption, which are not suppressed by anything" [Królikowski 1865: 39]. These nuclei, or seeds of the Kingdom of God, may sprout in the same way that grain sprouts in its natural environment. In this way, in his book Królikowski saw nature as a space in which different forces and entities may allow their wills free reign, while simultaneously remaining in perfect harmony with God's will—and vice versa: the main condition for maintaining this harmony was spontaneous activity, which should not be contaminated by any dominion, suppression, or submission to the will of other entities (i.e. entities other than God). As Królikowski had it, spontaneity was the cornerstone of perfect and eternal harmony with God, and so of the coming of the Kingdom of God. In other words, for Królikowski, nature served as a metaphor for depictions of the utopian impulse, the triggering of which seemed to be even more important than offering a convincing vision of the perfect society.

Nature metaphors in Królikowski's works often coincided with remarks on Slavdom. In the aforementioned book from 1865, he extolled Slavic ruralism and the Slavs' peaceful temperament, and emphasized that the symbols of many Slavic nations were birds, which were by their nature vulnerable to predators [Królikowski 1865: 520–521]. As a result, in comparison to Jewish or Muslim communities, Slavic communities were more likely to uncover the path to the perfect society [Ibid.]. Similarly, his last voluminous book (published in Zurich in 1874) was largely devoted to reconsidering Slavdom in the categories of pure Christianity. This was his contribution to the ongoing discussion about traditional Russian communities. Królikowski's initial assumption in this question was that "the Moscow community will not make any progress until it destroys the tsarist mood within it" [Królikowski 1868–1874: 121]. In order to develop this stance, the Polish communist once again applied his rhetorical strategy of playing with words. He was convinced that *prawosławie* (the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Polish name of which constitutes a cluster of two words: "right", *prawo*, and a form of the verb "to extol", *ślawić*) could not accept even an unspecified idea of foreignness, because inside it, all were sincere brothers to each other, "even to a German" [Ibid.: 142]. Moreover, in

expressing his consistent hostility towards any form of authority, because “state” (*państwo*) lacked a stable meaning in Polish political discourse¹, Królikowski was able to formulate a harsh criticism of the state as a form of paganism. In his view, *państwo* referred not to a specific political organization, but rather to any social relationship based on obedience and subordination, which should not exist in a genuine Russian Orthodox community [Ibid.: 148]. As he wrote: “The Slavic community destroys all states, and is obedient only to God” [Ibid.: 131]. Characteristically, in this book he referred once again to Bakunin. The Polish communist claimed that Bakunin was “the first amongst Russians”, but also that, despite his many insightful opinions, even Bakunin was inclined to justify the vices of Russian society to some extent [Ibid.: 7].

Królikowski's deliberations on the communist transformation of Slavdom were interrupted by his departure to the USA in 1877², where he made contact with French radical circles in exile, and particularly with those Icarians who, in the 1870s, were attempting to learn from their previous setbacks [Cordillot 2013]. In the period 1877–1878, Królikowski addressed a number of letters and proclamations to them. Amongst these works, an article (later also published as a separate brochure) entitled “Apostolic Appeal” (*Appel apostolique*) deserves special attention. As he emphasized on its pages, the Icarian movement in the USA of that time was in a difficult situation, but it could nevertheless continue to inspire hope for a better world as long the ranks of the movement still included “Apostles of the living Christ”. The text read like a summary of all his deeds and ideas. He recalled that “[f]or sixty years of my life, in permanent community with certain of my friends who share my aspirations, I studied Christianity with unceasing ardor”. A few sentences later he added: “I felt completely abandoned to the grace and the will of God, almost like a leaf cast on a fast-moving stream, which has no power to change its course or stop” [LÉdKedLI 1878: 116]. Moreover, he stressed once again that the essence of true Christianity was not contained in certain beliefs, dogmas, or confessions, but in activities, and as such could be pursued by representatives of any religion. Likewise, he suggested the creation of small groups (5–13 people) which were to constitute seeds of the Kingdom of God [LÉdKedLI 1878]. In

¹ For example, in Samuel Bogumił Linde's Polish dictionary from 1811, state (*państwo*) is defined as “aristocracy”, “wealth”, “rich family”, and “land”, as well as “government” or “rule” [Linde 1811: 627–628].

² Two French historians have claimed in their recent works that Królikowski had departed back in 1864 [Cordillot and Fourn 2002], but there are a number of sources supporting my position. First of all, in 1877, two radical French journals published in the USA noted that Królikowski “had just arrived” in that country. Secondly, as was mentioned above, in 1865 and 1874 he published two books in Europe (in Bendlikon and Zurich respectively). Thirdly, in the early 1870s, he was still sending letters to his Polish friends from Paris, but he broke off relations with them several years later. All these considerations indicate that he departed in 1877.

essence, his last brochure, as well as other short letters and notes from this period, seems to consist of ideas he had conceived and expounded beforehand, simply presented one more time in new circumstances.

However, the reactions his propositions received were significant. There is considerable evidence that, in the last years of his life, Królikowski enjoyed real popularity among radical French émigrés in the USA. For instance, according to a note written by Christian Tidal for publication in a newspaper in 1878, Królikowski gave a lecture in a private house belonging to one of his supporters, during which the Polish communist, in his customary manner, explained that all the means necessary to establish the Kingdom of God on earth were at the disposal of all people. It was enough, explained Królikowski, to listen to the eternal voice of God, and to follow one's senses and heart. As Tidal wrote, the lecture was attended by several people [LRI 1878: 54–56]. This is not to say that Królikowski's ideas and style pleased everyone: for some French communists of that time, his style was archaic.

This charge warrants further examination. While for at least two decades before the Spring of Nations, religious metaphors had been the rage [Bowman 2016: 271], even in the 1870s, this type of political expression was by no means outdated. For example, an anonymous author writing in *L'Étoile du Kansas et de l'Iowa* (most likely Jules Leroux) was very enthusiastic about Królikowski's appeals to Icarians, and stressed that the Polish communist should be carefully distinguished from Cabet, because "his [Królikowski's—PK] communism is no longer identical to Cabetism, with its social despotism and tyrannical institutions [...] It is an infinitely superior doctrine of complete life" [LÉdKedLI 1877: 56]. At the same time, however, the author insisted that Królikowski's mode of communication was obsolete, pompous, and pretentious. The style of the evangelic letters by which Królikowski spoke to the Icarians could bear fruit in the 1840s, but not once a modern, liberating communism had become a well-established idea. Moreover, as the author of this polemical comment stressed, the word "brother", with which Królikowski addressed the Icarians, was archaic because modern communists realized that brotherhood could not be established in society as it stood [LÉdKedLI 1877: 58]. Paradoxically, however, Królikowski was convinced that his ideas were entirely aimed at other archaisms, such as constitutions or governments [LÉdKedLI 1877: 56–58]. In his works from this period, a recurrent motif was his criticism of the "old world", with all its vices and suffering. Nonetheless, in the eyes of his peers, these calls to break with the old were seen as archaic.

All in all, this third stage of his close cooperation with French radicals shows once again that he applied different motifs, metaphors, themes, and forms to express his ideas in French and for a French audience. Reflections on nature and Slavdom were evidently left behind. However, as a result of his deep

involvement in French circles in the USA just before his death, he died almost completely forgotten by his countrymen. After his death on May 5, 1879, only two French radical journals in the USA published his obituary. The author of one of them, Charles Fauvety, emphasized that “Królikowski had only one purpose, which was also that of the early Christians: the establishment of the reign of God on the earth, and that reign of God was for him tantamount to fraternal and equal communalism” [LRI 1879: 287].

Conclusions: Playing with the utopian impulse

As the analyses conducted in this article demonstrate, Królikowski belongs to those 19th-century Polish political thinkers who, by repeatedly changing their place of residence, enjoyed many and varied experiences. Obviously, one can point to a number of abiding motifs in his works, and this fact has even induced certain researchers to state that his ideas, once established, never evolved [Sikora 1972]. To me, however, statements like this seem far-fetched [Kuligowski 2016]. Instead, I would like to call attention to the fact that all his ideological investigations were influenced by issues affecting Polish and French radical circles.

It is evident that, in Królikowski's case, these contexts intersected and overlapped in original ways, but also that each of these contexts enhanced specific aspects of his political ideas. His experiences within the Polish community were the basis for the reluctance he felt towards democracy (understood above all as domination by the majority) and armed struggle. Thanks to his profound participation in French political life, he gained the conviction that no constitutions or laws, even if regularly amended (as in the case of the subsequent Icarian communities in the USA), can guarantee the stable development of a community, not to mention the transformation of the whole world. It is worth noting that most of these experiences enhanced the critical dimension of his thought, whereas his positive propositions, aside from certain examples from the early phase of his activities, were instead hidden behind the curtain of overarching metaphors, such as natural phenomena or true Christianity.

The latter issue in particular played an enduring role in his works. Inspired by French mystics and radicals who saw Jesus as the first true revolutionary, Królikowski contributed significantly to the emergence of a fully-fledged type of radical discourse in which metaphors directly derived from the Bible were key. This type of discourse by its very nature imposes the overarching concept of a relentless fight to the death between good and evil, without the possibility of any compromise, an idea which did indeed make itself felt in some of Królikowski's works. In other words, the application of religious metaphors in political discourse could result in a particular mode of confrontation with political opponents [Kuligowski 2018]. Indeed, this issue became part and

parcel of Królikowski's deliberations. His constant circling back to the question of the utopian impulse keeps bringing him back to the question of modes of liberation for those who were oppressed in any given circumstance. Królikowski claimed that oppressors were to be completely destroyed as a pure evil, without going into detail concerning the economic conditions for oppression.

Thus, the Polish communist heralded a specific vision of utopia which was not grounded in any scientific considerations and, in some points, seemed even to be anti-scientific. Using vivid metaphors to characterize the negative elements in the ongoing clash between good and evil, Królikowski consistently applied such metaphors as "Magogs", "Antichrists", "Pharisees", "dissenters" and the like, regardless of the actual object of criticism. In this way, he seems to suggest that his works may be read and comprehended instinctively and outside of the particular context of his times, because they touch upon perennial questions for which the only relevant frameworks are universal categories concerning the eternal struggle between good and evil. As his work makes clear, the desire to bring this struggle to a triumphant close was the driving force behind his attempts to promote the utopian impulse. Moreover, Królikowski's utopias were imagined not only as beyond time (as perennial structures invented with the intention that they would be applicable in any context and any period of time), but also beyond space. His passing comments on the role of nature as a mirror of God's will, along with the disgust he feels for modern cities as such, suggest that, as far as spatial categories were concerned, his utopias were rural and far from modern civilization.

Therefore, in expounding his utopian reflections in isolation from time and space, Królikowski focused on the utopian impulse, which may be thought of as a general belief that each and every man bears "God's seed" (using the Polish communist's own terminology), i.e. the will and desire to see the genuine Kingdom of God on earth, along with an instinctual hatred for oppressors and rulers. Profound changes in all other dimensions of the politico-social sphere were to take place as a consequence and aftermath of the fundamental, internal shift within mankind. Seen from this angle, the utopian impulse which underlay Królikowski's enduring reflections on a new society may be understood as an essential element of the Romantic vision of man, according to which the new man should foster and cultivate such virtues as self-sacrifice for the sake of others, as well as patriotism and deep religiosity [Hroch 2007]. Thus, Królikowski's utopia, with its emphasis on the utopian impulse, was profoundly Romantic. What's more, in comparison to his Polish and French peers, his optimistic attitude towards the possibility of change initiated by small groups of the most faithful comes across as the most radical aspect of his utopias, while rupture with the existing, material, old world is the most consistent aspect and his religious language the most developed.

Many popular illustrations of utopia show spotless cities, neatly grouped into precise districts, developed around clearly delineated lines and circles. In this type of city, all that is natural, wild, and uncurbed is pushed outside the city walls. Having collected and scrutinized imaginary scenarios like these, Zygmunt Bauman concluded that they depict the human striving to tame the forces of chaos and nature [Bauman 1976]. Królikowski's utopian propositions seem to reject these schemes, affirming spontaneity at many levels of social organization. Utopia can be established only when what is natural displaces what is civilized, and what is spontaneous displaces what is coerced. Only then will the utopian impulse, once unleashed, clear a path to the Kingdom of God.

List of abbreviations

BJ — Biblioteka Jagiellońska w Krakowie = Jagiellonian Library in Kraków.
BNF — Bibliothèque nationale de France = National Library of France, Paris.
BŚ — Biblioteka Śląska w Katowicach = Silesian Library in Katowice.
SHSMO — The State Historical Society of Missouri.

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